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SUBJECT: ALLIES WELCOME INTER-AGENCY BRIEFING ON U.S.
MISSILE DEFENSE POLICY IN EUROPE

REF: STATE 96526

Classified By: DCM John Heffern, for reasons 1.4(B)&(D).

¶1. (C) Summary: NATO Allies received a September 17 briefing on the President's decision on the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense Review positively, especially its linkage with NATO's missile defense plans. A number of Allies asked questions regarding possible missile defense cooperation with Russia. Czech and Polish comments were constructive. Turkey said it best when its representative noted that, while the technology may have changed, U.S. commitment to European security had not. Note: This message has not/not been cleared by USDP Flournoy. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Following the briefing given to a special session of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) by an inter-agency team led by Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michelle Flournoy, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Ellen Tauscher, and Director of the Missile Defense Agency LTG Patrick O'Reilly, a number of Allied Permanent Representatives (PermReps) commented on the briefing. All noted that they were offering preliminary thoughts without instructions from capitals, and all praised the depth and timeliness of the consultations.

ALLIED STATEMENTS, QUESTIONS ON BMDR

¶3. (C) Italy spoke first, welcoming three key takeaways: the basing of the BMDR on the scope and nature of the threat; the new possibilities in missile defense engendered by technological advances over the past five years; and the importance of the indivisibility of Alliance security. The Italian PermRep anticipated support from Rome for the U.S. decision.

¶4. (C) The United Kingdom said the threat-focused BMDR made "eminent sense," and asked Allies to focus on the next steps for NATO. He proposed a NATO review of the impact of the BMDR on NATO's missile defense architecture study and on the proposed expansion of ALTBMD, NATO's missile defense command and control backbone. He noted that on first inspection, the work already done in these areas remained valid and timely, but that a short-term assessment of the potential effects of the Phased, Adaptive Approach on NATO's missile defense plans was crucial.

¶5. (C) Norway's PermRep praised the "once-again timely" consultations on the BMDR. He was particularly struck by threat-driven process of the BMDR, and by Under Secretary Flournoy's promise that today's consultations were the beginning of a rich conversation with Allies on European missile defense. He said both NATO Defense Ministers, meeting in Bratislava in late October, and Foreign Ministers

in early December would want to partake of that conversation.

He closed by asking what effects today's announcement would have on the Russian Federation and the possibility of NATO-Russia missile defense cooperation.

¶16. (C) The Polish representative made two points: His government had always stressed that the decision on a European component to U.S. missile defense had always been a sovereign American decision; and today's announcement was being carefully analyzed in Warsaw. He added that Prime Minister Tusk had spoken with President Obama an hour earlier about the BMDR outcomes. The important thing for NATO, he added, was to begin a robust debate on how to proceed with Alliance missile defense.

¶17. (C) Denmark expressed its "great satisfaction" at the quality of the briefing and the timeliness of consultations. Its PermRep also asked what the ramifications of the BMDR would be on NATO's practical work on missile defense in Europe, as well as the possibilities which might open up for NATO-Russia cooperation on missile defense.

¶18. (C) The Czech response came in four points: First, NATO's decision to pursue missile defense options remained valid; second, along with the UK, the Czechs agreed that NATO must focus immediately on the effects the BMDR outcomes will have on NATO's missile defense program; third, what the Czech PermRep described as the U.S. "modification of attitude" on European missile defense shouldn't cause NATO to lower its ambitions. Allies should still approach the 2010 Lisbon Summit with a missile defense plan in hand. Finally, he saw the Phased, Adaptive Approach as an opportunity to test

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Russia's "seriousness" on cooperating with NATO on missile defense. He also asked what next steps NATO should take on exploring the possibility of missile defense cooperation with Russia.

¶19. (C) The German PermRep, in the most cautious response of the day, stressed that NATO had always viewed missile defense as a "moving target," and part of a broader response to the ballistic missile threat. He endorsed the UK call to study the potential effects of the BMDR on NATO missile defense, and wondered where the potential to enhance missile defense cooperation with Russia might lie. Finally, he asked Under Secretary Tauscher what the relationship was between the BMDR and START follow-on negotiations with Russia.

¶110. (C) The Spanish representative said he had seen positive responses already from Moscow, which was good news. He also asked about the possibility of missile defense cooperation with Russia, as well as the potential superiority of sea-based missile defense systems over their land-based counterparts.

¶111. (C) Romania noted that the ballistic missile threat to Europe was "real and evolving," and that the indivisibility of Allied security was key to any missile defense program. Assessing the impact of the BMDR on NATO missile defense was crucial, but so was maintaining the energy and momentum of NATO's program. Missile defense may or may not be a moving target, but NATO did not want to become a static target for enemy missiles.

¶112. (C) The Turkish representative took special note of where the Phased, Adaptive Approach departed from the program of record -- in providing for the indivisibility of Alliance security. There had clearly been a change in technological solutions to the ballistic missile threat based on a revised assessment of that threat; what had not changed, however was the U.S. commitment to overcoming that threat and to Alliance security.

¶113. (C) France weighed in last, noting it had always supported a phased approach to European missile defense, and

it appeared that the Phased, Adaptive Approach met that criterion well. France also supported follow-on work at NATO, and asked for more information on missile defense cooperation with Russia.

BMDR TEAM RESPONDS

¶14. (C) Under Secretary Flournoy expressed her appreciation for all the comments tying the BMDR process to NATO's missile defense efforts, and noted that the BMDR process had taken previous NATO missile defense work into consideration when it arrived at the Phased, Adaptive Approach. She added that the President's decision would enhance opportunities for the U.S. to cooperate with Allies on European missile defense.

¶15. (C) On the question of sea-based missile defense systems, Under Secretary Flournoy said that Allies who were considering purchasing Aegis systems would be able, if desired, to enhance them with ballistic missile defense capabilities. LTG O'Reilly added that, while it was true that sea-based systems had an advantage in survivability, land-based systems were more cost-effective, and also, given the geometry of Europe and the nature of the threat, essential. A mix of both types of systems was optimal.

¶16. (C) To the several Allies who had raised the question of Russian reaction to the BMDR review outcomes, Under Secretary Flournoy replied that she did not know. Earlier Russian reactions were to prior, erroneous press accounts of what the review would contain. The U.S. had made a point of flying to Warsaw, Prague and Brussels to consult with Allies, and had not yet discussed them with Russia. As she had noted before, this was not about Russia -- this was about working with Allies to defend Europe. That said, there might well be technological opportunities for cooperation with Russia on missile defense.

¶17. (C) LTG O'Reilly expanded on that point, noting that he had visited radar sites in Gabala, Azerbaijan, and Armavir, Russia. Both sites offered additional capabilities to European missile defense from the Iranian threat, albeit not target discrimination such as the radar previously planned for the Czech Republic would have provided. (He added that such discrimination capabilities were now being designed into

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interceptor missiles themselves, and that the netted sensor system under current consideration would be much less vulnerable to enemy pre-emption than a single site, however capable.) What the Russian radars could add was early tracking of missile launches, giving a NATO missile defense system a higher probability of success. That said, the Phased, Adaptive Approach did not depend on Russian capabilities to function, although a NATO system which included these U.S. sensors, interceptors and command and control nodes would function better with the added Russian early tracking capabilities.

¶18. (C) On the question of its potential interface with NATO's ALTBMD structure, LTG O'Reilly noted that the Phased, Adaptive Approach was distributed, flexible and adaptable. Interceptors and sensors will be able to be fully integrated with ALTBMD.

¶19. (C) In response to the German question on START follow-on negotiations, Under Secretary Tauscher noted the expiration date for START, and the urgency with which negotiations were being conducted in Geneva. However, Presidents Obama and Medvedev had stated clearly in April that START follow-on negotiations would not deal in any way with ballistic missile defense, but solely on the balance of and further reductions to offensive systems. President Obama's press conference, held right before the NAC, had made the point that the previous U.S. program of record on missile

defense had posed no threat to the Russian Federation, and that its concerns were unfounded. Iran was the threat, and the U.S. would welcome Russian contributions to dealing with that threat. The NATO-Russia Council could provide a useful forum for discussing cooperation against the Iranian threat.

¶20. (C) Secretary General Rasmussen closed the NAC with an agreement among PermReps to assess the impact of the U.S. BMDR on NATO's missile defense program, with a view to presenting findings to the NAC ahead of the Defense Ministerial October 22-23 in Bratislava.
DAALDER